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ABSTRACT

Phase III of the Louisiana School Effectiveness Study (LSES-III) was designed in part to obtain rich, qualitative data on the characteristics of more and less effective schools in the Gulf South. Data were gathered on eight matched outlier pairs of schools during the 1984-1985 school year. Of the eight historically ineffective schools in LSES-III, four were actively engaged in school improvement efforts during the study. None of these efforts was dictated from the state or district; none was externally funded. This serendipity provided an opportunity to observe improvement efforts which were of the "naturally occurring"--as opposed to externally developed, mandated or otherwise offered--variety. The four projects are described in this paper. The suggestion is made that they fall along two independent dimensions: Technical vs. Programmatic change efforts, and efforts focused on a point along a continuum ranging from orderliness to excellence. Comparisons and contrasts to the more frequently studied, formally planned and conducted school improvement efforts are made. (Author/LMO)

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School Improvement Efforts:
Qualitative Data from Four Naturally Occurring Experiments
In Phase III of the Louisiana School Effectiveness Study

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Abstract

Phase III of the Louisiana School Effectiveness Study (LSES-III) was designed in part to obtain rich, qualitative data on the characteristics of more and less effective schools in the Gulf South. Data were gathered on eight matched outlier pairs of schools during the 1984-1985 school year. Of the eight historically ineffective schools in LSES-III, four were actively engaged in school improvement efforts during the study. None of these efforts were dictated from the state or district, none were externally funded. This serendipity provided an opportunity to observe improvement efforts which were of the "naturally occurring" --as opposed to externally developed, mandated or otherwise offered --variety. The four projects are described in this paper. The suggestion is made that they fall along two independent dimensions: Technical vs. Programmatic change efforts, and efforts focused on a point along a continuum ranging from orderliness to excellence. Comparisons and contrasts to the more frequently studied, formally planned and conducted school improvement efforts are made.

»»School Improvement Efforts:

Qualitative Data from Four Naturally Occurring Experiments

In Phase III of the Louisiana School Effectiveness Study

Research on Schooling has made substantial progress in the last decade. Studies by Brookover et al. (1979), Rutter et al. (1979), and Edmonds (1979) among others generated tremendous optimism that schools could be systematically improved. Results from those studies have been used to develop a second generation of school effectiveness studies. The goal of that research has been to develop change models, using the extant literature, which are then implemented in local districts. Several of those programs have documented dramatic effects. School improvement efforts by the Connecticut State Department of Education, the New York City public school system, and Project RISE in Milwaukee are among those which have received national attention for their logical, research based change programs.

A literature is developing on the process of change in schools which employ such externally developed research for local benefit. Huberman and Miles (1984), Rosenblum and Louis (1981) and, at a state level, Armstrong, Anderson, Odden and Huddle (1986) provide excellent studies of systems making formal efforts to improve the quality of their schools.

The above efforts share common characteristics which are, unfortunately, uncommon in American public education

today. First, the targeted schools received external support for their improvement efforts. The support may have been technical assistance from a special state department taskforce, or, in the case of a few large cities, from a local school improvement team (with external, and often private financial backing), a federal NDN or Title IV-C grant, or ready access to university based researchers in search of inexpensive data bases.

Second, the schools implemented programs which were developed elsewhere. Either the school or the district sought out a pre-packaged answer to a problem they sensed; or, more often, a program which appeared interesting and worthwhile was offered at little or marginal expense to the the school/district and the offer was accepted.

Third, many of the schools which become involved in these improvement efforts were not terribly "at need." One of the ironies of school improvement is that schools which are least at need are often among the most eager to improve themselves.

In LSES-III we looked at eight schools which were clearly "at need". Serendipitously, as we were examining them, four were involved in improvement efforts of one sort or another. Three of those efforts were completely internally developed, and none received external funding. In this presentation we will describe those naturally occurring efforts and compare them with the larger body of

literature on externally developed school improvement projects.

Background: The Louisiana School Effectiveness Study, Phases I-III.

LSES is conceived as a five phase undertaking. The first two phases (1980-1984) involved a pilot- and a macro-level examination of a stratified random sample of schools across Louisiana. Methods and instruments used largely replicated the Brookover et al. (1979) efforts in Michigan; while analyses and interpretations offered advances (see Teddlie, Stringfield, and Desselle, 1985, and Teddlie and Stringfield, 1985). Beyond replicating many of Brookover's findings, the use of second-order factor analysis to extract meaning across principals', teachers', and students' data bases; and the differentiation of characteristics of effectiveness in middle vs. low SES schools were informative. Thirteen specific state, LEA, and school level recommendations were derived from LSES-II.

LSES-III was designed to provide more detailed, concrete, micro-level information of the type that might prove useful to local schools which, in Phase-IV, will be attempting to implement meaningful school change . Even the best principals and teachers rarely think in terms of second-order factors or MANOVAs. They work in a world of problems of the order of, "Where is bus #36?", "Who has taken Billy's pencil?" and , more broadly, "What text

series should we order?" and "How can I possibly get through these math skills in time for the competency tests in March?" The team designed LSES-III to gather quantitative and qualitative data as might respond to at least the broader of those questions.

Method

Twelve school systems had comprised the LSES-II population. One additional large system was added to the sampling pool for LSES-III. Nine pairs of schools were chosen using the following procedure:

1) Within individual school systems, third grade school means on the Total Reading section of the state Basic Skills Test (BST) (a criterion referenced, minimum skills test) were computed. The BST is administered in late March of each year. Mean scores were developed for both the '82-'83 and the '83-'84 school years.

2) Within each large school system, and among contiguous rural systems, regression models were developed in which mother's education, father's profession, and student body racial composition were independent variables predicting mean BST reading scores. A total of seven separate models were used.

3) A school was considered for inclusion in LSES-III if,

   a) the school scored above (or below) achievement prediction both years,

   b) The school scored substantially above (or below)

prediction at least one year, and

c) a matching opposite directional outlier of similar economic and racial composition was identified within that system (or in a contiguous system, in the rural models.)

4) Among the potential pairs identified through steps 1-3c, pairs were chosen within the following constraints:

a) three must be rural, three urban, and three urban-to-suburban.

b) pairs must be included from northern, central and southern Louisiana,

c) The sample must include pairs of predominantly minority, predominantly majority, and mixed student populations, and

d) no system would contribute more than one pair to the sample. (One exception was made to allow the study of a pair of extended day programs.)

Nine pairs of outlier schools were chosen using criteria 1-4d. The third grade situation in one school proved, upon observation, anomalous within the school and the pair was dropped after the fall observations, leaving 8 matched pairs in the sample.

Instruments:

Data gathering in each school included the use of eight instruments plus extensive, qualitative field notes. The specific instruments are described in more detain in

Stringfield and Teddlie (1985), Teddlie et al. (1986) and Suarez et al. (forthcoming). Briefly, they included paralleled questionnaires for principals, teachers, and students, high- and low-inference classroom observation systems, a school observation checklist, and protocols for interviews of principals, teachers and staff members.

To ensure comparability of achievement gain data across school districts, and to provide norm referenced achievement data (in addition to the BST data) the research version of the 3-R's Test Level 9 (Riverside, 1983) was administered to all 3rd grade students in the 16 schools, fall and spring of the '84-'85 school year.

Procedure:

Each school was visited by a two person team for three full school days in both the fall and the spring of the 1984-1985 school year. Principal and teacher questionnaires were administered during the three-day fall visits, student questionnaires during the three-day spring visits. At all schools, the 3-R's Test was administered to all third graders during the morning of the third day of the site visits, both fall and spring.

During each three-day visit, field teams devised an observation schedule which included 12 classroom visits per observer, such that each observer visited every third grade class for at least one class period each day. Other classrooms were scheduled for observation as time permitted.

Observations were scheduled so that at some point during the three days each class was observed during every hour listed as an academic period.

Louisiana elementary schools are under state mandate to provide a specific number of minutes of instruction in reading, language arts, and mathematics. Observers were instructed not to code behaviors during times between periods, but to begin coding one minute after any designated academic time had begun.

As Phase III data gathering progressed, two phenomena became clear to the teams in the field. First, although the field teams had been kept uninformed as to whether the schools they were visiting were historically high or low performing, the teams had no difficulty correctly categorized all 16 schools. This was particularly striking considering that the pairs were matched for SES and race, and that often the particular team that visited one outlier of a pair did not visit the other. The authors took this phenomenon as evidence that the school selection criteria had quite successfully identified historically high and low achieving schools within the various economic strata. (Data regarding several quantitative differences between these two sets of schools is being presented by Teddlie et al. in another session at this conference.)

A second phenomenon was equally clearly observed by the teams. Four of the eight historically low outliers were

engaged in efforts to improve their performance. These efforts were occurring independently of the LSES, in the absence of a unified state or local school improvement programs, and without clear mandates or programmatic support from the local districts. The four appeared to be occurring independently of other actions being taken in their districts and state.

When 1985 BST and 3-R's Test data were analyzed, they revealed that all four efforts had been at least partially successful. None of the schools had become positive outliers, but all had shown substantial improvement.

These in-house school improvement programs so interested the research team that they became the focus of this presentation. In the time remaining, the four schools and projects will be described (each with a pseudonym), generalizations about the group will be asserted, and comparisons between these and other, more externally initiated school improvement projects will be offered.

THE FOUR SCHOOLS AND THEIR PROJECTS

Millard Fillmore Elementary School is a brightly colorful, modern, carpeted suburban school, built with a modified open space architecture. In the near decade history of the school, no staff member has asked to transfer out. On more than one occasion teachers at Fillmore told research team members, "We just love Fillmore." The staff appeared quite comfortable with itself. Students were pleasant, well

dressed and active. A parent group was active in the school, and, in effect, ran the library. The principal was gracious, calm, proud of her school and of what she had made of it. She considered the school to be "heavy into Madeline Hunter."

The school district provided curricula for four academic tracks. 1A was a gifted and talented curriculum. Track 1 was for students scoring in the top 23% nationally on the local administration of a nationally standardized, norm-referenced test. Track 2 was for the middle 66% of the students, and 3 was for students scoring in the bottom 23 percentiles. This relatively affluent school simply did not concern itself with the most advanced track. As one teacher explained, "I think Piaget was right, you can't push kids to learn before they are ready." (It is important to note that many students, often from less affluent neighborhoods in the district, seemed to perform quite successfully in curriculum 1A.)

The research team noted that, in six days of observation, no third grade class began on time. The students and teachers exhibited a tacit understanding that the 8:25 bell meant "begin heading toward your classroom." Not on the schedule was a 5 minute transition between each period, a late re-beginning after each recess, busses leaving Fillmore five minutes before school was officially over (meaning that the last 15 minutes were lost to instruction), and a constant stream of children to and from

bathrooms, the office, the library, and, in some cases, just hanging out in the halls. The net effect of these not-on-the-schedule down times was a loss of at least an hour a day of available academic time for all students.

The improvement project at Fillmore was designed to correct a simple, observable problem: other, less affluent schools in the district were outscoring Fillmore on the statewide BST, particularly at the 3rd grade. Newspaper articles listing schools and scores were being published. A state test was not yet developed to measure basic skills achievement at grades 4-6, so test scores in the higher grades were of minimal concern. The problem was those third grade test scores.

Three actions were taken to correct the problem. The first two were taken by the principal. She reversed the teaching assignments of her "best math teacher" (a woman who had historically taught fifth grade) and one of the third grade teachers. That is, the strong fifth grade teacher was moved to third grade, and the (presumably weaker) third grade teacher was moved to fifth.

Second, the third grade was, in isolation from the rest of the school, put on a departmental system, so that all third grade students received their math and science instruction from the "best" math teacher. Being on a unique schedule had the inevitable side effect of having bells going off in third grade spaces (in the rather open

architectured building) throughout the day at times the students were supposed to be "on task."

Third, the third grade teachers developed a system for teaching "test taking skills". This included practice at filling in circles on multiple choice test items, and practice on tests which were similar in content to the BST.

These three changes did result in a rise in third grade BST scores. Putting a schools best teacher at the point of measurement is likely to result in gain in the measure. (In all probability, had there been a fifth grade basic skills test, the changes would have resulted in a drop in those scores.) Taking time away from instruction to teach "test taking skills" also "works." It works to achieve the objective of higher test scores. Given a finite number of hours in a school year, however, taking time away from instruction in reading and math to teach "test taking skills" cannot improve true reading and math achievement.

Fillmore made no substantive change in philosophy, in management, in curriculum, in instruction. Indeed, the staff at Fillmore saw no need to make such adjustment. They firmly believed they were a fine school. They simply had a small problem with test scores. What we perceived to be the larger problems--that the students at Fillmore were off task more than on, that the curriculum was not challenging these mostly bright, mostly advantaged students--was not perceived by the Fillmore staff as a problem and, hence, not addressed.

We saw Fillmore as a school making technical adjustments to achieve a specific objective: higher Basic Skills Test scores. The adjustments solved the specific problem.

Theodore Roosevelt School

The new principal at Theodore Roosevelt School was a soft spoken man with a reputation for toughness. For several years he had been assistant principal at the local high school. When the superintendency became open, several influential community members had asked him to apply for the job. A man in his thirties, he decided instead to take the principalship of Roosevelt. Upon hearing his decision, four of Roosevelt's teachers resigned. While the research team was unable to interview the four who left, we noted that the principal took some pride in that particular group's action.

Roosevelt has no library, but receives an allotment of elementary school library books each year. The principal described coming to Roosevelt his first day and finding the teachers lounge virtually inaccessible due to the large number of boxes of books piled therein. He learned that the former principal had simply stored all incoming boxes of books in the teachers lounge, and the staff had done nothing to distribute them. His first action became the distribution of hundreds, perhaps thousands, of library books to the classrooms of the school. Each room was to have its own small library, teachers were encouraged to

trade books among themselves, and student were to be encouraged to read widely.

The literal and symbolic meanings of that first step were not lost on Roosevelt's teachers: a new day had dawned, the "basics" were going to be stressed.

A new discipline policy was implemented at Roosevelt. Laisez faire was gone. The bell meant that it was time for all students to be in their classes, working. The principal instructed the faculty to push forward academically. If a student did not achieve, he was called in for a personal talk with the principal. Students who made the principal's newly installed honor roll found their names printed on a bulletin board outside the school office, and listed in the nearest small town's newspaper.

Two separate research teams observed the implementation of the new principal's policies in the fall and spring. We joined with the teachers in applauding the steps he had taken. Several teachers reported that for the first time in years their classes were going to finish their texts.

The data gathered in classrooms was, however, less impressive. It was true that classes began on time, and that teachers had tasks before the students at all hours. Our measures of student engagement and of teachers rates of interactive teaching were, however, less impressive. While we did not doubt the teachers' reports that they and the students were working harder, we noted that the quality of teaching left much to be desired. Teachers put work in

front of students more that they interacted with their students. They did not ask as many questions as the teachers in their matched positive outlier school, and the questions tended to be more factual. Introductions to new topics were brief, lectures were rare, drills tended to be slow paced.

Our sense was of a school that had made substantial progress, yet had a ways to go. Children were being put through their paces more than challenged. We would have had more confidence in the future of Roosevelt had anyone there shared our concern. Not unlike Lightfoot's (1983) description of George Washington Carver High School, the quantitative and qualitative data from Roosevelt documented a tightly run, greatly improved school, but one without a vision for instructional excellence.

Dwight D. Eisenhower Elementary School

The principal at Eisenhower was one of the grand old ladies of that middle-sized city's school system. She had worked in the system for over thirty years, had been the principal at Eisenhower for many years, and, like almost every principal in LSES, expressed earnest pride in her school.

Eisenhower had been involved in Phase II of LSES, and several research team members reported vivid memories of unruley students jumping out of their seats, students leaving the room without permission during testing (including one who left via a window), principal and

teachers seeming oblivious to the obvious management problems, and generally of being quite relieved to have been done with Eisenhower.

This made the impact of the one dimensional change in climate during LSES-III all the more remarkable. Prior to the beginning of the 84-85 school year, the staff had decided that student discipline was a problem at Eisenhower. They had bought a very straight forward assertive discipline package. The particular purchase featured posters, stickers, awards and other rewards all of which included pictures of the "A-Team" television program. "Mr. T" and his friends were everywhere at Eisenhower. More importantly, students knew what they were supposed to be doing, knew what was the punishment for failing to comply, and generally complied with teachers' requests.

The research team members who had visited Eisenhower during Phase II were most impressed by the change in climate. An environment had been established in which meaningful instruction was possible. Without a doubt, the school had been markedly improved.

Unfortunately, other features of the school had not been improved. Recesses lasted longer than scheduled, and movement of students between any two points always took longer than scheduled. The general quality of instruction might be described as lackluster. The rate of interactive teaching in Eisenhower's classes was low. In classes, a much higher percentage of students were off task than in

Eisenhower's matched sister school. Students were not generally disorderly--a marked improvement--nor were they stimulated.

With the faculty's recognition of a problem, and the purchase of a packaged discipline program, Eisenhower had moved up to mediocrity.

Andrew Jackson Elementary School

Jackson School is an inner city school in one of Louisiana's largest cities. Its student population reflects that of the surrounding community: it is 100% minority and poor. The school building had been recently renovated and was in relatively good shape.

The year before LSES-III, a new principal had been assigned to Jackson. She was young, intelligent, and hard working. The preceding several years she had worked in the School Board central office. She understood the ins and outs of getting things done in the system, and she used her knowledge for her school.

In her first year, the new principal had tightened management practices at Jackson, established a tough discipline code, and begun building a sense of school identity and pride through such enterprises as school t-shirts and pennants. She managed to procure an increased library book allotment for Jackson.

During the summer preceding LSES-III, the school system had gone through one of its not-unusual fiscal crises. In

an effort to "trim the fat" from the central office budget, several middle level managers had been assigned to individual schools for one year to serve as curriculum coordinators. For the LSES-III year, Jackson was the recipient of one such coordinator. He proved to be an extraordinarily talented, enthusiastic person, highly knowledgeable about elementary school curriculum matters, and reasonably well read in teacher and school effectiveness research. The curriculum coordinator strove to achieve, in his 9 months at Jackson, a fully articulated curriculum and a highly interactive norm for teaching. He made substantial progress toward both goals. In fact, Jackson was the one negative outlier in LSES-III which, by the spring observations, spent a greater percent of time in interactive teaching than their local "high outlier" match.

The curriculum coordinator worked beautifully with the principal. For the year, she handled administrative matters and student discipline, he managed curriculum improvement efforts and staff development.

The principal expressed no illusion that her curriculum coordinator was anything other than a one year windfall; yet was quite skilled at getting the maximum good for her school from this occurrence. In an interview, she expressed the opinion that she could not achieve meaningful program improvement without the assistance of a curriculum specialist. She saw her administrative duties as sufficiently taxing that she would never have time to

properly direct such an effort. Neither administrator was sure the extent to which their substantial gains would institutionalize.

None the less, in two years the school had seen substantial changes. Order had been restored, the curriculum had been greatly upgraded and integrated, teachers had received substantial feedback on their teaching styles and had been encouraged to experiment with new techniques, student and teacher attendance rates were up, a few parents were actually beginning to falsify their addresses so that their children could attend Jackson, moral had been raised, and test scores were rising.

A two factor model of internal "improvement" efforts

We believe that these naturally occurring improvement efforts may be productively analyzed along two dimensions. We do not claim that this analysis is definitive or all inclusive, and are aware of the limitations of attempting generalization from four cases.

Yet it is a start at examining a frequently occurring phenomenon: schools which are performing far below prediction, are attempting to improve, and are provided with little to no external support.

The first dimension in this sample might be described as technical to programmatic. In this and many other school effectiveness studies, as in local newspapers around the country, schools were evaluated in no small part through use

of aggregated scores on norm and criterion referenced achievement tests. It is possible to raise test scores without going through the substantial efforts required to redesign a curriculum, change teaching strategies, and without improving the quality of children's educations. Studies in Chicago, Austin, New Orleans and other cities (Pechman, 1985) have indicated that these technical "improvements" occur with some frequency. We do not advocate changes in schools which achieve the objective of higher achievement test scores without striving for the goal of increased student achievement. We were not surprised, however, to have the opportunity to document the "success" of such an effort.

The second dimension is concerned with meaningful efforts to improve schools and schooling. In LSES-III, and in the research team's prior experiences, these efforts may be described as being targeted at specific points along a continuum. At the most basic, they deal with turning chaos into something resembling order. Principals and teachers at this end of the continuum work to reduce the number of dangerous situations to which students are exposed. They increase the orderliness of the school. In so doing, they increase the amount of time potentially available for instruction. This level was dealt with at Eisenhower and Roosevelt during LSES-III, and apparently was a major issue at Jackson the year preceding LSES-III.

Efforts to increase time on task, and to push the students through the curriculum lie at a midpoint on this dimension. Individual staff members at Roosevelt were making efforts to increase student time on task, without knowledge of the existence of the construct. They were simply going about the common sense business of "getting their students to work hard." At Jackson, under the one year curriculum coordinator, teachers were more formally and often more systematically attempting to increase student engagement rates and to increase their own rates of interactive teaching. Neither the administration nor the teaching staff at Eisenhower appeared interested in, or even aware of this level of potential growth.

At the other end of this dimension stand efforts to make maximal, creative use of the academic time available. For efforts to succeed at this point, the teacher must be able to assume the orderliness of the school and the availability of substantial uninterrupted blocks of academic time. The curriculum coordinator at Jackson was occasionally able to work with one or more--never a large group--teachers toward the goal of assisting students in exploring their full potential.

Comparison with research on externally developed innovations

Huberman and Miles (1984) conducted extensive analyses of 14 school improvements, each of which was based on a pre-existing NDN or Chapter IV-C program. They summarized their

findings in seven areas: setting, motives, initial perceptions, early implementation, external assistance, transformations, and changes in users' practices. Each of these will be briefly described and contrasted with the four schools attempting improvements in LSES-III.

SETTING: Huberman and Miles found that innovations occur when districts were reasonably environmentally stable and had at least a moderate past interest in new programs. They found that the involved schools, by contrast, were more "traditional." Impetus for innovation was largely from above. "Central office administrators thus became the prime advocates of the new practice, often reaching directly into the schools to implement it, and thereby leaving the building principal to play a secondary role" (p. 271).

The opposite was the case in the four schools studied. Central office showed no initiative in improving any of these poor performing schools. In every case, the initiative came from the principal or, to a lesser extent, the faculty.

MOTIVES AND ATTITUDES TOWARD ADOPTION: Huberman and Miles reported four motives for innovations: administrative pressure, the promotion of professional growth and expansion, added funding, and, rarely, out of a perceived need to solve a specific problem. By contrast, in the four LSES schools, the innovation was developed in each case to solve a specific problem. Test scores at Fillmore, faculty frustration with anarchy at Eisenhower, general entropy and

underachievement at Jackson and Roosevelt. In no case was substantial, external administrative pressure or the promise of added funding at issue. Only at Jackson was staff development a goal in the innovation.

INITIAL PERCEPTIONS AND ASSESSMENTS: In the NDN and IV-C projects, teachers and principals saw hard work ahead, higher administrators saw the path as easy. In the LSES schools, the higher administrations weren't even aware that some of the innovations were occurring. In Jackson and Roosevelt the teachers and principals saw the innovations as difficult but worthwhile. At Eisenhower the staff saw the changes as relatively easy and highly effective. Most teachers at Fillmore reflected on, or experienced, the "innovation" very minimally.

EARLY IMPLEMENTATION: A good predictor of long term success in the Huberman and Miles sites was a difficult start, one in which the principal and administrators held out for fidelity of implementation. At the two most effective change processes in the Louisiana study, Roosevelt and Jackson, beginnings had been similarly difficult.

ASSISTANCE: Huberman and Miles found that large scale, change bearing innovations "lived or died" by the amount and quality of assistance that users received once the process was underway. Three of the Louisiana innovations received no external assistance. The fourth, Jackson, had the services of a special, one year curriculum coordinator. This person made many of Jackson's innovations possible.

One could imagine that Roosevelt would have benefited from similar assistance. It is less easy to think of productive uses Eisenhower and Fillmore would have found for substantial technical assistance.

The research team came away from the four school improvement efforts without a great sense of striving for excellence in the schools involved. Only at Jackson did such striving seem to be even remotely connected to the often substantial efforts. It is possible that, given the constraints imposed on local schools and principals, excellence is indeed best obtained, even best thought about, with the assistance of external consultation. Many local people may be too close to their current realities to have the luxury of dreaming of new horizons.

TRANSFORMATION: was greatest when local administrators held out for fidelity and least with "locally refitted" change efforts, according to Huberman and Miles. In three of the LSES innovations there was no formal model which could be refitted. The principals (and curriculum coordinator) simply developed common sense programs and stuck to them. At Eisenhower the faculty realized that for the new discipline program to succeed, they would all have to pull together. By and large they succeeded in implementing the new discipline program in its original form.

CHANGE IN USER PRACTICE: in the NDN and IV-C projects, users typically saw the change as being within themselves--

their perception of themselves was typically of professionals becoming better "clinicians", and getting to know their students better. To a minor extent Jackson School reflected that pattern; to a greater extent, however, developing clinical skills was a tertiary issue in the programs studied in LSES-III. The gains were seen as increased orderliness and higher achievement, rarely did a faculty member mention becoming a better teacher.

Summary

In the process of gathering extensive field data for Phase III of the Louisiana School Effectiveness Study, the research team was able to observe four low achieving schools undertaking school improvement efforts. The efforts were neither prodded nor economically supported by higher administrators. Three of the four efforts were made in the absence of any external support. Yet all four achieved at least one of their objectives: their 3rd grade students' scores on standardized tests rose. We believe that the successes can be described along two dimensions: technical vs. programatic changes, and an order-to-instructional excellence dimension.

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